

## **An Idealized Cognitive Model Analysis of Metaphors and Metonymies in Two American Rock Songs**

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### **Abstract:**

**Background:** The analysis of Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs) has received growing interest since the emergence of Cognitive Linguistics in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the further development of Cognitive Stylistics. These theoretical backgrounds allow researchers to explore metaphors and metonymies from a cognitive perspective, shedding light onto literary genres that had been previously left outside the scope of multiple analysis on semantics. On the other hand, American Rock Songs are examples of near-poetry that tackle abstract concepts like “love” which are prone to the creation of ICMs. Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyze the ICMs in two American Rock songs.

**Methodology:** Using a modified ICM model for analysis, two American Rock songs were analyzed: *Accidentally in Love*, by Counting Crows, and *Livin’ on a Prayer*, by Bon Jovi. Both songs were manually examined to account for all instances of metaphors and metonymies that were then classified. Then, these examples are discussed.

**Results and discussion:** Both songs show a prolific use of metaphors and metonymies, apparently as a result of their main topic: love. *Accidentally in Love* can be overall defined in terms of the metaphor LOVE IS A BATTLE and *Livin’ on a Prayer* would be defined as LIFE IS A BATTLE. Still, extensive use of metaphors is encountered in both songs. *Livin’ on a Prayer* shows, in addition, an elevated number of metonymies.

**Conclusion:** Examples of these ICMs are commented on and directions for further research are provided.

**Key Word:** Idealized Cognitive Model; Metaphor; Metonymy; Semantics; American Rock; Cognitive Linguistics.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Cognitive Linguistics emerged during the last quarter of the 20th century as a reaction to the postulates of Generativism, wherein language is envisaged as a system of arbitrary symbols governed by mathematical rules. Syntax is thus the primary object of study in Generative Linguistics, and meaning (or semantics) is merely tangential in the study of language (Ungerer & Schmid 1996; Ruiz de Mendoza 2001). This new approach takes meaning in its core and is based on the experimental analysis of data instead of on raw logic and mathematical rules (Hilferty 2001).

One of the main fields of research in Cognitive Linguistics is the study of what Lakoff (1987) calls Idealized Cognitive Models (ICM). Moreover, a new framework within the Cognitive Linguistics paradigm has appeared recently: Cognitive Stylistics or Poetics. This approach allows the interpretation of literary works from a cognitive perspective (Freeman D.C., 1995; Freeman M., 2000, 2002). Also, Peña (1998, 2011) has contributed to the plethora of studies under the umbrella of Cognitive Stylistics. In her articles, she attempts to analyze literary works from a cognitive point of view. With this, she aims to shed light on the understanding of these works with the analysis of the ICMs present in the texts.

However, and despite the recent trend in conducting studies within Cognitive Stylistics, there are still many prolific genres in the creation of metaphors that have not been yet explored. Thus, the main aim of this paper is to analyze from a cognitive perspective the contents of two pop-rock songs –*Accidentally in Love* by Counting Crows and *Livin’ on a Prayer* by Bon Jovi- showing the presence of different cognitive models along them. Following the main principles in Cognitive Linguistics, ICMs are omnipresent in language; consequently, a series of examples of these ICMs are expected to be found also in these two songs.

### **II. METHODOLOGY**

In order to carry out this task, we will take into account the work carried out by leading researchers in Cognitive Linguistics such as Lakoff (1987), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Johnson (1987), Ruiz de Mendoza (1996, 1999) or Peña (1997, 2003).

Lakoff (1987) refers to ICMs as the way in which knowledge is organized. They are cognitive structures that represent reality under a specific prism, creating, as a result, an idealization of reality. Lakoff also distinguishes four kinds of structuring principles:

- Propositional structures
- Image-schematic structures
- Metaphoric mappings
- Metonymic mappings

On the other hand, Ruiz de Mendoza (1996) distinguishes between *operational* and *non-operational* cognitive models. Metaphor and metonymy would be *operational* cognitive models which make use of propositional structures and image-schemas (*non-operational* cognitive models). Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2003) also argue that metaphor and metonymy can be further divided into more basic cognitive operations. For the purposes of this study we will focus on image-schematic structures and metaphoric and metonymic mappings.

In Cognitive Linguistics, metaphor and metonymy are conceptual mechanisms we use everyday in order to communicate our ideas. A metaphor is understood as a mapping or set of correspondences across conceptual domains (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). There is a source and a target domain. The conceptual structure of the source is used to understand and talk about the target. Lakoff and Johnson propose a tripartite classification of metaphors:

- Structural metaphors: those in which one concept is metaphorically understood in terms of another. For instance, LOVE IS A DISEASE.
- Orientational metaphors: those which are based on spatial orientation (up- down, front-back, etc.). For instance, GOOD IS UP.
- Ontological metaphors: those metaphors based on the 'Great Chain of Being'. Lakoff and Turner (1989) refer to the relation between human beings and lower forms of existence. From the highest order to the lowest one: humans, animals, plants and inanimate substances. An example of this kind of metaphors would be PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS.

Furthermore, Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (2002) and Santibáñez (1999) postulate a slight improvement to this classification: they substitute the category of orientational metaphors by image-schematic metaphors. This allows the embracement of not only orientations but also other image-schemas like CONTAINER and PATH.

Johnson (1987: xiv) defines image-schemas as "recurring, dynamic patterns of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that give coherence and structure to our experience". A series of wide taxonomies have been proposed to classify image- schemas. Peña (1997, 2003) proposes an easier and more straightforward classification. She distinguishes between *basic* and *subsidiary* image-schemas. According to her, CONTAINER, PATH and PART-WHOLE image-schemas are basic and are the ones from which less basic image-schemas are derived. These image-schemas will play a very important role in our analysis.

Finally, following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), we can define a metonymy as a mapping within domains. Metonymy has traditionally been classified into three different types:

- Whole for part metonymies: we mention a whole domain to talk about one of its subdomains. An example could be *Spain won the world cup*.
- Part for whole metonymies: we mention a subdomain to talk about the whole domain. For instance, *Give me a hand, please!*
- Part for part metonymies: those in which a part of a domain is used to represent another part. To mention a classical example, *Nixon bombed Hanoi*.

In order to carry out the present study, two American pop-rock songs were selected: *Accidentally in Love* by Counting Crows (2004) and *Livin' on a Prayer* by Bon Jovi (1986). The choice of songs was not random, but it was motivated by the stories narrated in them (love stories in different stages). It is precisely the abstract concept of "love" what seems to trigger a considerable amount of metaphors in everyday language.

Once the songs were selected, a manual analysis was carried following the modified ICM model, identifying all metaphors and classifying them. Next, some of the most relevant examples are shown and discussed.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the cognitive mechanisms and concepts previously described are applied to these two songs in order to show the way ICMs are omnipresent and recurrently used.

#### **Counting Crows' *Accidentally in Love***

*Accidentally in Love* narrates the story of a man who faces love –probably one of his first times- and feels quite unconfident about it. This anonymous man explains the feelings that love causes on him: at first, he is afraid and does not want to be in love; then, he realizes there is little he can do about it; and finally, he surrenders to love and thinks of love as something positive as well as accidental.

Basically, this song talks about love. Love is quite an abstract concept and, consequently, a difficult matter to talk about. Many times, metaphors are needed to express abstract feelings.

Among the main metaphors that we can find in this song we have LOVE IS A PATH, an image-schematic metaphor. The PATH image-schema is one of the most basic ones that is acquired in the first months of life. In this case, the man in the song is afraid of love and wants to run away from it:

*Makes me wanna turn around and face me  
But I don't know nothing about love*

In this metaphor, he is a traveler who is traveling along 'love', which is understood as a path. A little bit afterwards, this metaphor changes; love is no longer the path but the destination in this path:

*Because everybody is after love*

And then, the change in the perspective is completed; he is no longer afraid and he also wants to chase love. We can see this idea in the following lines:

*So I said, "I'm a snowball running"  
Running down into the spring that's coming  
All this love melting under  
Blue skies belting out sunlight, shimmering love  
Well baby I surrender to the strawberry ice cream  
Never ever end of all this love*

The idea of PATH is also present here together with some other metaphors. This is a very productive stanza as far as metaphors are concerned. Three interesting structural metaphors are shown here: PEOPLE ARE SNOWBALLS, LOVE IS A STRAWBERRY ICE-CREAM, and LIGHT IS GOOD/HAPPINESS. The protagonist feels like a 'snowball running', that is, something that cannot be stopped until it reaches an obstacle. And going on with this idea of ice and cold, he talks about ice-creams. He talks about love as if it were an ice-cream –a sweet and colorful one: strawberry-. This ice-cream melts and 'shimmers' love (he talks about love as something that shines) under the skies full of 'sunlight'. These latter metaphors are based on the idea that light is something positive while darkness is something negative.

The idea about love that the protagonist had at the beginning of the song has changed completely; and now, he 'surrenders' to the strawberry ice-cream which is love. Here we have another important metaphor: LOVE IS A BATTLE. He fights against love. He does not want to fall in love but he cannot win this battle and so, he surrenders; in other words, he lets love to affect him. A very essential and recurring image-schematic metaphor when talking about love comes into play here: LOVE IS A CONTAINER. When somebody is 'in love' we talk about love as a container: one can be 'in' and 'out' of love.

*Settle down inside my love [...]  
Accidentally in love  
I'm in love*

The metaphor LOVE IS A CONTAINER is exemplified in the previous lines. When something is inside a container is affected by the container itself. In this case, the protagonist is inside the container 'love' and is affected by it. This results in a much more positive view of life of our character. He moves from the fear at the beginning to happiness (sometimes expressed by the metaphor LIGHT IS HAPPINESS).

Also, there are two important image-schematic metaphors I would like to comment on: UP IS GOOD / DOWN IS BAD. These metaphors are based on the VERTICALITY image-schema which could be considered as a subsidiary one from the PATH image-schema. Let us see some examples:

1.- *So I said, "I'm a snowball running"  
Running down into the spring that's coming*

2.- *Blue skies belting out sunlight*

3.- *Jump a little higher*

In example one, we have the metaphor DOWN IS BAD. Even though the destination of the PATH of the snowball is a positive one, the metaphor DOWN IS BAD is present because the protagonist does not have control over this action. In examples two and three, we have the presence of the VERTICALITY image-schema; in both cases something that is above is presented as something positive.

Finally, there is one last worth commenting idea: the fact that falling in love is something accidental. When somebody 'falls' in love, they 'fall' –which implies lack of volition- into the container 'love'. This is present in the songs in lines such as:

*I think about it, can't stop thinking 'bout it [...]  
Well baby, I surrender to the strawberry ice-cream [...]  
We're accidentally in love  
Accidentally in love (x3)*

All in all, it could be argued that the whole song is summarized in terms of the LOVE IS A BATTLE and LOVE IS SOMETHING YOU CANNOT CONTROL metaphors. As we have seen, the main character in the song fights a battle against love in which he surrenders because he realizes of the impossibility of controlling his feelings.

We have just seen the main metaphors in *Accidentally in Love*. Let us now analyze the main aspects of Bon Jovi's *Livin' on a Prayer*.

### **Bon Jovi's *Livin' on a Prayer***

Bon Jovi's song is not as much productive as Counting Crows', but there are still some interesting metaphors which are worth analyzing here. *Livin' on a Prayer* narrates the story of a couple (Tommy and Gina) who are going through a series of problems in their lives. Tommy just lost his job while Gina works all day long so that both can survive. Their economic situation is not good at all. However, the main message of the song is that they will make it, no matter what, as long as they stay together.

*Livin' on a Prayer* shows one important image-schematic metaphor that is recurrent in the song: LIFE IS A JOURNEY. 'Life', just like the case of 'love' in *Accidentally in Love*, is, to some extent, an abstract concept. Therefore, metaphors of many kinds are usually used when referring to life. In our case, life is understood as a journey where many setbacks occur:

*Whoooah, we're half way there*

This is a clear example of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. It is an image-schematic metaphor based on the idea of PATH. The couple in the song is traveling along this path. Their destination could be 'happiness' or 'end of economic problems'. She insists that they have almost reached their destination and urges him to keep going on. Also, there is a moment in the song when Gina wants to run away from the path she is currently traveling on and move into a new one:

*Gina dreams of running away*

The use of the subsidiary VERTICALITY image-schema is also present in this song. In this example, we find the metaphor DOWN IS BAD:

*He's down on his luck... it's tough, so tough*

Bon Jovi could have written 'he wasn't lucky', but instead, he preferred using the metaphor DOWN IS BAD. An interesting datum is the fact that the number of metonymies found on *Livin' on a Prayer* is higher than in *Accidentally in Love*. These are three interesting examples:

- 1.- *Tommy used to work on the docks*
- 2.- *Unions been on strike*
- 3.- *Tommy's got his six string in hock*

In example one, we have a part for part metonymy; 'docks' is used to talk about a specific company operating on the docks. Example two is a whole for part metonymy; the whole domain is mentioned to refer to one of its subdomains –the unionists. Finally, example three is a much elaborated metonymy; this one was probably created consciously. It is a part for whole metonymy: one of the subdomains of a guitar (six strings) is employed to refer to the whole domain (the guitar).

We also found examples of The CONTAINER image-schema. In this case, it is used with a human being: A PERSON IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS. This metaphor has been repeatedly analyzed by many leading researchers. In this song, Tommy is the container for many feelings that he used to set free through his guitar. He is holding in those feelings and cannot release them since his guitar is in hock:

*Now he's holding in what he used  
To make it talk – so tough, it's tough*

To finish with the analysis of this song, we will argue that there are two metaphors which summarize this song. We find the following line towards the end of the song:

*You live for the fight when it's all that you've got*

In this sentence we have the metaphor LIFE IS A BATTLE: Tommy and Gina are the fighters against a series of setbacks which could be considered the rivals. This is another way to put the main metaphor underlying the whole song –LIFE IS A JOURNEY/PATH. The journey of Tommy and Gina contains so many hitches that it is no longer a journey but a battle.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the present paper we have analyzed two literary works from an original point of view. Thanks to the Cognitive Linguistics theory and the Cognitive Stylistics framework new ideas can be extracted from literary works.

The main tenets in Cognitive Linguistics claim that ICMs are omnipresent in our everyday speech. Correspondingly, a high number of ICMs has been found in these two songs. ICMs, especially metaphorical mappings, are many times used to refer and understand abstract concepts such as LOVE or LIFE. We have been able to picture the use of these metaphors in our analysis. Even though some metaphors seemed to be purposely elaborated by the authors, most of them are the fruits of an unconscious use of the language where these constructs are present.

Besides, we have been able to shed new light on the interpretation of the songs thanks to this analysis. We could summarize them in a straightforward way and provide an overall interpretation of the works by means of metaphors:

- In the case of *Accidentally in Love*; the song could be summarized with the metaphors LOVE IS A BATTLE and LOVE IS SOMETHING YOU CANNOT CONTROL.
- As for *Livin' on a Prayer*, LIFE IS A PATH/BATTLE could very well summarize the song.

A deeper analysis of the ICMs in these songs could reveal important and new details. In particular, the idea of 'holding on and staying together so that everything will be fine' seems to be quite recurrent in American literature. It would be very interesting for further research to analyze which metaphors are used in this kind of speech and in what kind of situations.

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